

*Tibet Ergül*

Dear Honorable Judge Carney,

I'd like to begin this letter by conveying to you my sincerest gratitude for providing me with an opportunity to address the court. I am humbled by the grace shown to me through this process.

It is of utmost importance to me to say that I am sorry. I am sorry for the suffering and damage that I caused to Planned Parenthood, the doctors, patients, staff, and all people who depend on Planned Parenthood for reproductive health services. I am sorry to society for being responsible for the dissemination of hatred and unease, and sowing division as a result of the actions which my co-conspirators and I set forth. I am sorry to my parents for squandering the opportunities they worked so hard for me to have, and the expectations I went against by committing an act that will now keep me separated from them for years. I am ashamed of myself, undeserving of the mercy of the people and institutions I affected through my crimes, and I will forever feel remorse and guilt for my deeds that have hurt so many.

Over the course of fall 2020 and spring 2021 I had been living alone in Arizona and suffering the onset of [REDACTED] trying to balance my school, work, and personal life while simultaneously seeking mental health treatment for my affliction. A lot of trial and error, and time, was needed to find a proper dosage and combination of drugs to bring me to a modicum of stability, which was made more difficult by the addition of fresh trauma during my time away from home; one involving the girl I dated in college becoming physically abusive and subsequently cheating on me, and another involving an emotionally manipulative roommate that I lived with for a year. I began trying to repress these painful memories on top of past mental problems that had not yet healed through substance abuse, which only served to exacerbate my symptoms over time. The sentiment I've carried since my high school days of being misunderstood and looked down upon led me to believe I was unlovable and unable to create any more meaningful relationships with people, so I gave up. By the end of winter 2021 and fledgling days of 2022, my bitterness, self-loathing, and feeling of lonesomeness gave way to an anger that was directed outward towards peers, family, and society. Thus, my return to California for spring break of March 2022 was well longed for and I was more than happy to finally be able to spend time with my old friends – who were accepting of me – again, namely with Chance who was on leave from duty in the U.S. Marine Corps. Chance was the most senior person in our friend group and I gained respect for him over the years because he had always been there for me when I needed a friend or someone to talk to about a variety of things. Having my interests and intellectual discourse left ignored by my father in the past, I looked up to Chance almost as if he was a brother of mine and was keen to please him.

On the night of March 21, 2022, Chance spontaneously brought up the fact that he wanted to attack a Planned Parenthood clinic and wanted my partnership in committing the deed, and I ended up agreeing to it. I would like to stress that, during this time period, I did not harbor a specific hostility or dogma that led me to commit the act which caused my involvement in this case, and I was totally indifferent to women's reproductive rights and abortion clinics. I had just spent a long period of time alone, feeling as if I did not belong to any causes, nor groups; I believed that if I did not go along with satisfying my friend's wishes and, in a way earn his respect, I would lose another relationship that I had cultivated and end up lonelier than I had been before. So, I joined him in damaging the property of the clinic by use of a Molotov cocktail. I knew why he wanted to do this; but I helped him anyway. As a byproduct of the crime I committed, I felt a surge



of adrenaline for a night, and a sense of belonging – however vile that may sound. Nevertheless, at no point throughout the preparation or waiting before committing the act did I ever have the intention to hurt or injure anybody in this process. I was a jaded, vulnerable, and gullible person during this period of my life and I, to this day, haven't forgiven myself for taking part in an act that implied so much vitriol through its exaction, and could've caused so much more chaos than it ultimately did. I am thoroughly regretful of the fact that it took my arrest, and the subsequent revelation of the results of my actions for me to comprehend the amount of pain I caused, and chaos I was responsible for. The women, doctors, and staff I unnerved through my actions, both directly and indirectly, did in no circumstances deserve the enmity implied through the damage I caused to institutions of which they depended on or served. I not only caused, through my decisions, society to become unsafe, but for it to become more polarized. For this, and much more, I not only ask but beg for the forgiveness of the victims that were affected by my deplorable behavior.

I would like to emphasize the fact that [REDACTED] in the months leading up to my arrest made me an insufferable person. I would argue with my father every time I came back home and frighten my mother through the behavior I exhibited during my manic-depressive episodes, almost to the point of my parents divorcing because of the rift I placed between them. I was angry, and was starving myself to the point of being underweight; I was 5'8" and weighed at 135 pounds on the month of my arrest when I should've weighed 150-170 pounds. It was during this time of heightened resentment that I further bonded with Chance over the issues & conversations that I am ashamed of ever entertaining, and have pleaded guilty to. Over the years he was generally interested in talking about this sort of conduct and, accordingly, was the only friend of mine that I had such discourse with. Mollifying him only led me to become emboldened in further delving and engaging in the dialogue evidenced in the factual basis of my case.

Hence, I am glad that I was brought to justice for the crime my co-conspirators and I were associated with. This event has sealed the divide and made my parents closer in the pursuit of supporting me. My father and I have forgiven each other and mended our relationship considerably. In the absence of such an offhand shift in our lives, who could say where we could've ended up; I could've become so angry, depressed, and unhealthy over the course of the years that I would've potentially taken my life, and left my family unable to recover from all the pain and suffering I brought upon them. Without my time in custody, which has reached 12 months as I'm writing this, I don't think beating my addiction to substances nor would reaching a pinnacle in my mental stability have been conceivable. Being removed from all the distractions that life on the outside offers, I finally began to face my traumas head-on and it has helped me conquer my anger and depression. I must admit that I did not have a shortage of days where I felt hopeless and suicidal in my first 5 months incarcerated, yet I never gave up on bettering myself both physically – through exercise – and cognitively – by reading more books in 1 year than I have read throughout my whole 3 years at college. I kept suiting up and showing up to every single course offered to me since my first month in Santa Ana Jail, and so far I have accumulated certificates from classes including but not limited to: Breaking Barriers, Attitudes for Success, Anger Management, ANT Control, Psychology, Digital Literacy, Customer Service, Employability Skills, Bible Study Correspondence Course, Spanish Literacy, as well as Microsoft Word, Excel, Windows 10 Overview, Intro to Keyboarding I & II, and have earned my CA General Office Clerk certification from Santa Ana City College. In addition to self-improvement, I have assisted fellow inmates in

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studying for their GED's as well as aided in the drafting of their letters to the court, and for the last 3 months have been serving food and cleaning up the 3D mod here in Santa Ana City Jail.

With the help of Christ, and by reflecting on my faults and spiritual weaknesses throughout the time I have been in custody, I began redefining myself both mentally and spiritually. I have been able to recognize the mistakes I had once made for what they were. My decisions were driven by the anger that I once held towards myself being turned toward outward influences for this period of my young adulthood, and I was willing to blame anyone but myself for shortcomings that I faced. I was well educated academically, but completely ignorant in spirit. Finding God in a place like jail gave me the changes in perspective only a painful lesson could give, and taught me to "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer, distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality" (Romans 12:10-13). With that being said, I want to pledge to the court, my victims, and my family that I will never give up in bettering myself with each passing day. Once admitted to a FBOP facility, I will join the workforce (preferably in GED tutoring or UNICOR) while attending courses to obtain a trade license as a carpenter, machinist, or horticulturist. Additionally, I plan to continue the college education I left halfway by enrolling in Adult Continuing Education community college courses and earning an Associate's Degree in either Business Administration or similar major in order to increase my GPA for when I return to the free world and re-enroll in a 4 year university for my B.S. in Molecular Bioscience & Biotechnology – the major area of study I was involved in at Arizona State University. Depending on my immigration status after serving my prison sentence, I will return to live with my parents for a short time and pursue employment while also helping them run their Pilates studio. Besides continuing to attend therapeutic programs and taking advantage of support groups for the previously incarcerated, such as Project RISE, it is my utmost aspiration to provide church services in both the United States and home country of Turkey for Iranian and other expatriate Christians who are unable to practice their faith in their own countries due to persecution. It goes without saying that I am continuing my education surrounding the gospel both while in jail and once I arrive in prison in order to make this goal a reality. Finally, I will pay restitution to the parties affected by my criminal conduct, and pay back my family for bearing the cost of my delinquency both monetarily and emotionally.

Both my mom and dad came from practically nothing and are the most successful siblings in their respective families, becoming the main source of support for their parents even though they weren't expected to be. They achieved this through their unrelenting ambition and work ethic that sometimes caused them to be distant from me when I needed them. Though my parents were not always able to attend to me in my formative years, I still believe that they did their best in providing me with everything they believed a child needed to succeed and fulfill his potential. They never gave up on me, and never stopped learning how to become better parents. Now, there is a big effort on both sides to swallow our pride and provide unconditional love and support for each other, as well as a mustering of collective strength to show that we haven't lost hope in this time of tribulation. I love my mother and father more than anything the world has to offer, and I am blessed to have them as my parents. I had taken a lot of what they've provided me with for granted in the past, but now I understand that they have always given me all they can from the bottom of their hearts. I am indebted to them for cultivating the parts of me that are good, so I will dedicate my life to making amends to them for all the hurt that I caused.



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After the changes I incurred throughout approximately a year in custody, I can gladly say that I am not the same person that I was 2 years ago when I committed the heinous act that led to my involvement in this case; in fact, I am not the same person that I was right before my arrest either. This is why I often wish I could go back in time and meet the version of me who was too weak to say no to committing this crime, and too angry and ignorant to foresee the effects that my words and deeds would cause and tell him that the changes he is seeking in the world and his life can only come from a place of love, and not anger. I would tell him of all the places he could put his motivations to use in helping society become better than how it was yesterday. I would remind him of his accomplishments, of all the good that others have seen in him, and not to forsake his family who has always stood by him by throwing his life away on a whim.

Once more, I'd like to express my sincerest apologies to you, the court, the U.S. government, to my family, and to my victims. I am brutally ashamed to have done such evil to the people and government of the country that gave me and my family so many opportunities, freedoms, and abundant mercy. There hasn't been a day since my incarceration where I hadn't thought of the pain and suffering my family, and my victims have gone through as a result of my criminality. Taking me out of society has made me learn valuable lessons much faster than I could have on the outside suffering under the influence of addictions, distractions, and emotional turmoil. This hiatus from all the privileges that freedom offered has made me see how much I was taking the education, family, and life I had for granted; and my family nor I can handle going through anything such as this again. Consequently, it is my solemn promise that I will never, ever, go back to the methods, ideals, and habits that I formerly harbored.

I used to always ask the wrong questions:

"Why does everything I do lead to ruin?" - "Why is society designed to make me miserable?"

So, I asked myself:

"Has anything I've done actually made my life any better?"

Thank you, in advance, for taking the time to read this letter. I implore your compassion when making your final decision in my case, and truly hope the information I have provided will help you in consideration of my sentence.

Respectfully,

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